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# Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

## Reporting period from 25 June to 4 November 2016

## I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my previous report of 24 June 2016 (S/2016/572).

2. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally calm, including in the context of the tenth anniversary of the July-August 2006 conflict and related rhetoric on both sides. Tensions rose among communities in the Shab'a area during construction works conducted by the Israel Defense Forces south of the Blue Line in the Shab'a Farms. Israeli and Lebanese authorities maintained their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), the cessation of hostilities and stability along the Blue Line. My Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNIFIL continued to engage accordingly. There was no progress, however, on the parties' outstanding obligations under the resolution and towards a permanent ceasefire.

3. The resilience of Lebanon is increasingly contingent upon and at risk from the Syrian conflict. The security situation remained relatively calm thanks in large part to the continuing robust performance of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the Syrian border and with other security services in counter-terrorism operations throughout the country. Nonetheless, the threat of terrorist attacks persisted, as illustrated in the two suicide bombings in Al-Qa'ah on 27 June and the bombing in Zahlah on 31 August. The situation in the border areas remained fragile, with the Lebanese Armed Forces engaged in ongoing operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Nusrah Front militants.

4. During the reporting period, there was a breakthrough in the resolution of the two-and-a-half-year vacancy of the presidency of Lebanon, as a result of which the Government of Prime Minister Tammam Salam became a caretaker government. Agreement on a new government and its ministerial statement remains pending, however, while preparations for the 2017 parliamentary elections are ongoing. In my meeting with Prime Minister Salam on 20 September, in the margin of the General Assembly, I expressed my hope for the election of a president of the

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Republic and for a functioning government and parliament for Lebanon. We discussed the ongoing impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon and welcomed the united international support for the country's security and stability, including through assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces. I also thanked Lebanon for its generous hospitality to refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and stressed the need for the international community to do more to share the responsibility of assisting their presence in Lebanon.

5. The number of Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon remained stable, owing to the policy put in place by the Government in 2014 and 2015 to restrict access to exceptional humanitarian cases only. As at 31 October, 1,033,513 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR, including 47,138 in the UNIFIL area of operations. At the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held on 20 September, Prime Minister Salam highlighted the severe problems posed by the refugee crisis to the country's stability, security, economy and public services, emphasizing that Lebanon could not cope with such an "existential challenge" alone.

6. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps remained generally calm, except in Ein El Helweh camp, where tensions flared following the surrender to the Lebanese Armed Forces of dozens of Palestinian individuals suspected of involvement in militant activities since 24 July. On 22 September, on an exceptional basis, the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted an operation inside Ein El Helweh camp to arrest a Palestinian national, suspected of being a prominent member of ISIL, who was planning terrorist attacks in Lebanon. My Special Coordinator visited that camp to support efforts to keep stability there.

## II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

### A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

7. On 19 August, after tensions had built for some days, approximately 200 individuals, including a number of journalists, gathered in the vicinity of United Nations position 4-7C, south of Shab'a village, to protest against works by the Israel Defense Forces to prepare a driveable track in the disputed Shab'a Farms area south of the Blue Line, which had commenced on 7 August. Prior to the demonstration, UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel engaged closely with the local communities to mitigate tensions and prevent incidents along the Blue Line. During the gathering, 100 individuals, led by a local member of Parliament, crossed south of the Blue Line despite warnings by personnel from the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL. Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces personnel remained at some distance from the Blue Line. Demonstrators returned north of the Blue Line soon after, without any incident. Subsequently, UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces activities in the area focused on further reducing tensions.

8. During the reporting period, Blue Line ground violations were mainly committed by shepherds with their flocks in the Shab'a Farms and Bastrah areas

(Sector East) and by farmers cultivating their fields in the Rumaysh area (Sector West), despite warnings from UNIFIL. On 16 July, Israel Defense Forces fired a warning shot in the air and briefly seized a shepherd's flock that had crossed south of the Blue Line in the Shab'a Farms area. The Israel Defense Forces subsequently released the flock. Following previously observed seasonal patterns, Lebanese civilians violated the Blue Line while swimming in the Al Wazzani River. On two occasions, groups of three and six persons, respectively, crossed south of the Blue Line while taking photographs in the vicinity of Udaysah, Mays al-Jabal and Hula (Sector East). Lebanese civilian construction workers crossed south of the Blue Line on several occasions when installing drainage pipes and paving the access road to a well in the Blida area (Sector East). On 18 August, UNIFIL observed four members of the Lebanese Armed Forces intelligence branch crossing approximately 10 metres south of the Blue Line for about five minutes in the vicinity of Rumaysh.

9. UNIFIL generally enjoyed freedom of movement throughout the area of operations. In a few isolated incidents, UNIFIL encountered unfriendly behaviour and obstruction of movement, predominantly in Sector West. In the most serious incident, during the night of 28 August, a UNIFIL patrol was blocked by a group of more than 40 individuals in Bint Jubayl (Sector West), who alleged that the patrol had taken photographs of the community. A standoff with the crowd developed during which the patrol was subjected to threatening behaviour, and some of the vehicles' tyres were deflated. The situation was resolved with the assistance of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

10. In another incident on 28 September, an Observer Group Lebanon patrol observed from a distance nine men in civilian dress, carrying cameras and wooden sticks, violate the Blue Line north-east of Kfar Kila. Subsequently, the men who had crossed the Blue Line ran towards the Observer Group Lebanon vehicle, surrounded it, and damaged the car by throwing stones and using their sticks. There were no injuries to personnel and the patrol was able to leave the scene. Later the same day, some of the nine men sustained injuries when they hit a mine approximately 2 km north of United Nations position 9-64 in an area close to the Blue Line.

11. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander emphasized to Lebanese Armed Forces interlocutors that the mandate of UNIFIL requires it to have freedom of movement throughout its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces strives to ensure that the local population understands that UNIFIL can and must patrol unimpeded on its own in the area of operations.

12. UNIFIL continued to observe civilians with unauthorized weapons, mostly for hunting, in the area of operations. With the onset of the hunting season, the incidents significantly increased, mainly in the areas of Bastrah, Mays al-Jabal and Blida (Sector East). On 16 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces called upon Lebanese citizens to abide by a ban on hunting and to refrain from carrying weapons of any kind in the area south of the Litani River. On 18 September, UNIFIL observed two armed hunters in Dibil (Sector West) who were apprehended by Lebanese Armed Forces personnel. On several occasions, UNIFIL observed the presence or firing of small arms, including during weddings and funerals. In all cases, UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces of the violations.

13. The Israel Defense Forces continued to allege that Hizbullah continues to maintain military infrastructure and equipment in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL monitors the area of operations and the Blue Line and reports all violations of resolution 1701 (2006) that it observes, including the presence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL does not proactively search private property for weapons in the south unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity from that location. Where specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel, weapons or infrastructure inside its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains determined to act with all means available within its mandate and capabilities. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces command continued to confirm that it would act immediately to put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions.

14 Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace almost daily, mostly with unmanned aerial vehicles, but also with fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL protested to the Israel Defense Forces about the overflights and called upon the Government of Israel to stop them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested against the air violations to UNIFIL.

15. The Israeli occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line continued, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. To date, Israel has not responded to the proposal submitted by UNIFIL to both parties in 2011 concerning security arrangements aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the occupied area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of their agreement to the proposal.

16. The relations between UNIFIL and the local population remained positive and the Mission met regularly with its representatives. In addition to holding separate meetings with religious and municipal representatives, UNIFIL continued to implement quick-impact projects focused on improving access to basic services, facilitating the economic and social development of the local communities and promoting the empowerment of women. UNIFIL continued to support capacity-building of the Lebanese Civil Defence in firefighting and civil-military cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces. UNIFIL contingents provided medical, dental and veterinary assistance to the local population.

17. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained two brigades in the area south of the Litani River. In the light of the tense security situation along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a reinforced presence in the north-eastern part of the UNIFIL area of operations (Shab'a village and the Arqub area). During the tensions that occurred in the area of Shab'a Farms, the Lebanese Armed Forces temporarily deployed reinforcements. As part of a rotation of troops in the country, the Lebanese Armed Forces replaced the brigade in Sector East of the UNIFIL area of operations in October.

18. UNIFIL conducted an average of 13,337 operational activities each month throughout the area of operations, including patrols, checkpoints and observation tasks. The number of operational activities carried out by UNIFIL in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces was maintained at around 10 per cent. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to conduct foot patrols ("market walks") in villages and urban areas, providing opportunities for regular direct contact between peacekeepers and the local population.

19. In accordance with its mandate, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, which currently comprises two frigates, three corvettes and two fast patrol boats, carried out maritime interdiction activities and provided training for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. During the reporting period, the Maritime Task Force hailed 2,039 ships. The Lebanese authorities inspected and cleared 516 vessels. UNIFIL conducted a total of 312 joint exercises, workshops and training courses with the Lebanese Armed Forces, of which 209 were conducted with their Navy, contributing to enhancing operational capabilities and effectiveness, including on maritime interdiction, the use of coastal radar, boarding and medical support, as well as mutual understanding of operations.

20. The Maritime Task Force maintained a visible presence in the southern part of the area of maritime operations to prevent tensions between Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL does not have a mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which was installed unilaterally by Israel and is not recognized by the Government of Lebanon or the United Nations. The Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out frequent maintenance activities at the buoys, at times with divers. On several occasions, Israel Defense Forces patrol boats south of the line of buoys fired machine gun rounds or flares and dropped explosive charges to turn away Lebanese fishing boats.

## B. Security and liaison arrangements

21. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander was in frequent contact with Lebanese and Israeli authorities and facilitated two tripartite meetings, including on ways to explore concrete solutions to local sources of tension and thereby contribute to building trust between the two sides. In the tripartite forum and in bilateral meetings with UNIFIL, the parties consistently conveyed and demonstrated their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and to respect and maintain stability along and across the Blue Line. Both sides stated to UNIFIL their keen interest in not letting developments in the Syrian Arab Republic destabilize the situation in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.

22. Nevertheless, tensions occasionally increased in the vicinity of the Blue Line, in particular in response to the works carried out by the Israel Defense Forces in the Shab'a Farms area, south of the Blue Line. Following the initial communication to UNIFIL by the Israel Defense Forces that they would commence construction works on 7 August, UNIFIL immediately requested details on the nature, purpose and scope of the proposed works, and asked the Israel Defense Forces to allow time for coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces protested strongly to UNIFIL against the works, which it considered to be located inside the occupied Lebanese Shab'a Farms and to affect the nature of the terrain and change its features. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander

remained in ongoing contact with both sides, with a view to finding an agreed and coordinated way forward, reducing tensions in the area on the Lebanese side and preventing incidents. The matter was discussed twice in tripartite meetings on 25 August and 22 September, while the works were ongoing. UNIFIL maintained an enhanced presence in the area, including with observers from Observer Group Lebanon, and intensified its monitoring activity. The Lebanese Armed Forces also monitored the situation, including by deploying reinforcements to the area prior to a demonstration announced for 21 August, thereby preventing further violations of the Blue Line and maintaining calm among the population to the extent possible.

23. The parties continued to actively engage in a constructive manner in the tripartite meetings regularly facilitated by UNIFIL, during which they addressed violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including ground violations, Israeli air violations and the continued occupation of northern Ghajar. The parties also raised activities that had been considered provocations by the other side. A key objective of the Force's engagement, through the tripartite mechanism and bilaterally, was to assist the parties in finding mutually agreeable security arrangements and confidence-building measures to mitigate the scope for tensions or incidents in sensitive areas along the Blue Line, including those linked to seasonal agricultural activities.

24. Throughout the period, UNIFIL encouraged the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to use more proactively the established liaison mechanism to share information on planned activities and deployments, in particular in sensitive areas along the Blue Line. The Lebanese Armed Forces notified UNIFIL of an exercise in the Arqub area on 15 September well in advance, which allowed UNIFIL to duly inform the Israel Defense Forces and to be present on both sides of the Blue Line throughout the exercise.

25. UNIFIL continued its efforts with the parties to mark the Blue Line visibly on the ground. UNIFIL demining teams supported the marking process by clearing access lanes through minefields to six marker locations. Construction of 4 markers were completed, while 20 are under construction; 51 points are in the measuring phase and 15 points remain to be verified by the parties. In addition, UNIFIL continued to refurbish markers to ensure that they were intact and could fulfil their function. As a result, the total figure for Blue Line work progress, as at 17 October 2016, was 325 demined, 273 measured, 255 constructed, 238 verified and 184 refurbished.

26. There continues to be no progress towards the establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

27. As part of the strategic dialogue process with the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL pursued efforts to promote assistance by international donors to the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations. Together with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNIFIL participated in the Lebanese Armed Forces Executive Military Commission and consulted with representatives of international donors in Beirut, with a view to facilitating resource mobilization for the Lebanese Armed Forces in support of responsibilities under resolution 1701 (2006).

28. In its resolution 2305 (2016), the Security Council, bearing in mind the strategic priorities and recommendations identified in my letter of 12 March 2012 (S/2012/151) as a result of the strategic review of UNIFIL, expressed the need for a follow-up and update. In addition, the Council requested me, in accordance with global peacekeeping best practice, to conduct a strategic review of UNIFIL, examining the structure of its uniformed and civilian components and related resources, in an effort to ensure that the Force is configured most appropriately to fulfil its mandated tasks. In that regard, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will consult with a number of Member States and troop-contributing countries, as well as UNIFIL, on the best way forward. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in close coordination with UNIFIL, intends to complete the review by February 2017. I intend to present its major findings and conclusions to the Council once the review is finalized.

## C. Disarming armed groups

29. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of Lebanon continued to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In a statement to the Security Council on 12 July, the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that Hizbullah had never stopped its military build-up and had only enhanced its military arsenal since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), asserting that the group now possessed more than 120,000 rockets and missiles, compared with 7,000 rockets in 2006. He further asserted that Hizbullah had transformed the villages of southern Lebanon into terror outposts by placing rocket launchers and storing missiles in civilian areas, and warned that Israel would defend its citizens in the most vigorous and forceful way possible against any "miscalculation" by Hizbullah. In a speech on 13 August, the Secretary General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, spoke of the continued mutual deterrence between Hizbullah and Israel, reiterating that there was not a single point in occupied Palestine that could not be targeted by the rockets of the resistance in Lebanon. On 6 October, the head of Hizbullah's parliamentary bloc, Mohammed Raad, publicly stated that the resistance was growing in strength, equipment and hardware, and training on new weapons they had not used before.

30. Since 1 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services were reported to have arrested 217 individuals suspected of affiliation with extremist groups or involvement in terrorist activities throughout Lebanon, bringing the total number of terrorism-related arrests since January to more than 1,700. On 2 September, two Syrian intelligence officers were indicted for their alleged involvement in the twin suicide bombings against two Sunni mosques in Tripoli in 2013. On 14 October, the Lebanese Armed Forces and the General Security Directorate reportedly arrested members of 10 terrorist sleeper cells in various parts of the country suspected of plotting attacks during Ashura, including two would-be ISIL suicide bombers preparing attacks against religious sites in Beirut's southern suburb. The security authorities also reportedly dismantled a terror cell and identified a weapons warehouse in Bhamdun that supplied ISIL and the Nusrah Front, confiscating a large cache of arms. On 18 October, the authorities arrested a senior member of the Nusrah Front in Arsal. On 20 October, the General Security Directorate announced the arrest of eight Syrian nationals for belonging to terrorist

groups and for allegedly preparing a series of suicide attacks against UNIFIL patrols as well as in tourist areas.

31. There was no progress in the dismantling of the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada, which continue to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to effectively monitor and control parts of the border.

32. On 9 October, the Arab Tawhid Party announced the formation of the "Tawhid Brigades" to operate in all Lebanese regions alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services. The announcement came amid reports of localized initiatives at self-defence in various localities, including in the aftermath of the attacks in Al-Qa'ah.

33. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein El Helweh remained tense in the context of ongoing intelligence efforts by the Lebanese Armed Forces and Palestinian factions to curtail the presence of extremist groups. On 26 July, the Lebanese Armed Forces reportedly thwarted plans by ISIL and the Nusrah Front to perpetrate terrorist attacks inside and outside the camp, including in Sayda and Beirut. From 24 July onward, some 60 individuals, including 10 prominent figures suspected of affiliation with militant groups, surrendered to the Lebanese Armed Forces as part of a deal between the Lebanese authorities and Palestinian factions. The assassination on 19 September of a Palestinian accused of being a Lebanese Armed Forces informant triggered unrest in the camp that caused institutions affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to close for two days. On 22 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested alleged ISIL "emir" Imad Yassine, a Palestinian national suspected of staging a bombing campaign across Lebanon on behalf of terrorist organizations, inside Ein El Helweh camp.

34. On 14 September, the Government of Lebanon, with the support of my Special Coordinator, launched nationwide consultations to develop a national plan of action for the prevention of violent extremism. Based on the United Nations prevention of violent extremism strategy in Lebanon, consultations are expected to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society, to enable the Lebanese authorities to adopt practical preventive measures.

## D. Arms embargo and border control

35. Assertions of ongoing arms transfers to Hizbullah continued. In a speech on 24 June, Hizbullah leader Nasrallah stated that the budget of Hizbullah, its salaries, expenses, weapons and arsenal were all from the Islamic Republic of Iran and that the money reached Hizbullah just like it received the rockets with which it threatened Israel, and thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for its support. Referencing those statements in a letter addressed to me dated 5 July, the Permanent Representative of Israel asked me to demand that the Islamic Republic of Iran comply with resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004) and stop transferring weapons to terrorist organizations. The United Nations takes the allegations seriously, particularly given the statements by the Secretary General of Hizbullah, but is not in a position to verify them independently.

36. Hizbullah remained openly engaged in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, and others from Lebanon are also reported to have joined armed groups fighting there. Also in his speech on 24 June, Hassan Nasrallah stated that Hizbullah would increase its "large" presence in Aleppo and would remain engaged in the fighting there, noting that it was not possible to separate Lebanon from developments in the region, particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

37. There was a further decrease in recorded instances of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon, including nine incidents of shooting and nine incidents of shelling. But the situation along the border remained tense, with the Lebanese Armed Forces conducting ongoing operations against threats and infiltration attempts from armed extremists. Clashes with militants, including ISIL and the Nusrah Front, concentrated around the towns of Arsal, R'as Ba'albak and Al-Qa'ah. On 15 August, a roadside bomb targeted a Lebanese Armed Forces vehicle outside Arsal, lightly wounding five soldiers. On 16 October, a Lebanese Armed Forces officer was killed in Arsal by suspected ISIL militants. Hizbullah also continued to engage in fighting with ISIL and the Nusrah Front in the border area, and an increased number of clashes took place between militants from ISIL and the Nusrah Front.

38. The security plans for Tripoli, the Biqa' governorate and southern Beirut continued to be implemented. On 27 June, eight suicide bombers detonated themselves in the north-eastern border town of Al-Qa'ah, killing five other people. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, the first in a Christian village in Lebanon since the start of the Syrian conflict. Prime Minister Salam publicly asked residents to refrain from "chaotic self-defence". Interior Minister Machnouk stated that the attackers were not from among the local Syrian refugees, and concerns regarding retaliatory attacks against refugees did not materialize. On 14 July, three suspects were charged with involvement in the attack. On 31 August, a roadside bomb exploded in the nearby town of Zahlah, killing one woman. On 11 October, the military prosecutor charged Sheikh Bassam Tarras in relation with the bombing on suspicion of links with ISIL militants. On 19 October, my Special Coordinator visited the north-eastern border area, including Al-Qa'ah, Zahlah, Harmal and Labwah, in support of the moderation shown by local residents following the attacks and the work of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

39. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to update their capabilities development plan to better respond to security challenges. International assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces continued, including the delivery of equipment worth more than $50 million from the United States of America and continued assistance by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and others to strengthen the border capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Efforts to complete the deployment of land border regiments and watchtowers along the entirety of the border continued to progress. By 30 September, outstanding senior military appointments were confirmed, including the extension of Lebanese Armed Forces Commander General Kahwaji for another year.

40. Further to the London Conference on Syria, the Lebanese authorities reviewed the regulatory framework governing access by Syrian refugees to the labour market. They replaced the "pledge not to work", which was to be signed by all refugees, with a "pledge to abide by Lebanese law" to allow for the legal employment of

Syrian refugees in authorized sectors. Discussions are ongoing regarding the temporary waiving of residency fees. UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs are working on a "certificate of attestation" that would clarify the legal status of refugees and give them more mobility in Lebanon.

41. Despite the level of international assistance, self-reliance among the refugees is not achieved and refugees are surviving on the bare minimum, having exhausted their limited resources. Some 71 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live below the poverty line, marked by precarious food intake and nutrition and housing issues. Some 30 per cent of the Lebanese population also live below the poverty line and 10 per cent live in extreme poverty.

42. As at 30 August, available resources for Lebanon stood at $1.57 billion, with $1.22 billion already disbursed or committed for 2016. That includes $979 million provided to United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations for the 2016 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, which is now 47 per cent funded. That marks an increase of 48 per cent in international funding for Lebanon since June. At the first steering committee meeting of the Concessional Financing Facility in Beirut on 28 July, Lebanon presented three priority projects and requested $293 million in concessional loan support.

43. The number of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic decreased from 40,000 to 30,000 people. An estimated 65 per cent of Palestine refugees in Lebanon and 90 per cent of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic live in poverty, and unemployment reaches 23 per cent among the former and 53 per cent among the latter. On 6 October, the European Union announced a new allocation of $13 million for the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp.

44. On 5 October, the United Nations strategic framework for Lebanon for 2017-2020 was formally adopted by the Government of Lebanon. Based on a "whole-of-Lebanon" approach, the framework outlines an integrated response by the United Nations system in Lebanon to help address threats to stability, prevent conflict and improve socioeconomic prospects.

## E. Landmines and cluster bombs

45. Five manual mine-clearance teams, one explosive ordnance disposal team and one mechanical mine-clearance team continued to be deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. UNIFIL demining teams cleared 1,208 $m^2$ of land to provide access to Blue Line points and destroyed 23 items. The United Nations Mine Action Service conducted 56 quality assurance visits to demining sites and nine safety monitoring visits to refurbishment sites, as well as five landmine/explosive remnants of war safety training sessions. The Mine Action Service handed over demining equipment to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre. In response to the mine incident of 14 September, UNIFIL identified additional measures to mitigate the risk of future incidents related to landmines and/or explosive remnants of war.

## F. Delineation of borders

46. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border during the reporting period, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed. There was likewise no progress on the Shab'a Farms. In a statement to the Security Council on 12 July, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon reiterated the country's readiness to work towards closing the chapter of the Shab'a Farms and Kfar Shuba Hills occupation by Israel, recalling that his Government welcomed the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area proposed in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641) as a starting point. However, there has still been no reaction from Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic to that proposal.

## G. Political and institutional stability

47. Consistent with the statement by the President of the Security Council of 22 July (S/PRST/2016/10), my Special Coordinator conducted intensified contacts with Lebanese, regional and international parties, including through the International Support Group for Lebanon in Beirut, with the aim of helping Lebanon overcome its political and institutional crisis. My Special Coordinator continued to regularly convene the representatives of the Group in Beirut. Following a joint meeting with Prime Minister Salam on 15 September, my Special Coordinator and the representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council in Beirut called on all Lebanese parties to enable government institutions to function effectively and to proceed with the election of a president, and welcomed the intention of the Government to take steps to ensure that the 2017 parliamentary elections were held on time.

48. As noted by Prime Minister Salam in his address to the General Assembly on 22 September, Lebanon has been undergoing a severe political crisis, the apex of which was the inability of Parliament to elect a president. He stressed that the crisis had led to a quasi-paralysis of the legislative authority and to a slowdown of the work of the executive, and had had negative repercussions on the State's economic situation.

49. Systematic political obstruction by some parties, often accompanied by inflammatory language, has been particularly damaging, as it invites divisions along sectarian lines. On 25 August, the Free Patriotic Movement announced its boycott of Cabinet meetings and of the parliamentary dialogue, and threatened to hold mass street protests. The dialogue between the Future Movement and Hizbullah and the parliamentary dialogue process continued under the auspices of Speaker Nabih Berri, but the latter stalled after its most recent session on 5 September. The Cabinet convened only a dozen meetings, mostly on technical matters, owing to open disagreement among its members and threats of resignation or suspension of participation by some Ministers.

50. On 31 October, Parliament elected Free Patriotic Movement founder Michel Aoun as President of Lebanon, and Future Movement leader Saad Hariri was designated as Prime Minister on 3 November, following the announcement on 20 October by Mr. Hariri of his endorsement of Mr. Aoun for the presidency. Prime

Minister Salam continued to head the current Cabinet in a caretaker capacity pending agreement on a new government. Consultations on the formation and ministerial statement of a new government are ongoing.

51. On 19 October, after more than a year of inactivity, Parliament held a rare legislative session to pass urgent financial bills as well as a law on the establishment of the country's first national human rights institution. Preparations for parliamentary elections in May 2017 are ongoing.

## III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

52. UNIFIL continually reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, particularly following security threat warnings, and closely coordinated them with the Lebanese authorities. In the Arqub area (Sector East), strict security measures have remained in place for official movements by United Nations personnel, which require an armed security escort. Commemorative shooting during gatherings and funerals continued to pose a risk to UNIFIL personnel and the local population. During times of heightened tensions in the Ein El Helweh Palestinian refugee camp, UNIFIL adjusted its movements between the area of operations and Beirut.

53. On 14 September, while reversing, an armoured UNIFIL vehicle carrying five UNIFIL military personnel hit a mine next to a frequently used dirt road in the vicinity of Ibil al-Saqi (Sector East). The armoured vehicle protected the personnel, who were uninjured, but the vehicle suffered significant damage. Lebanese Armed Forces provided support in securing the site. In response to the incident, all military and civilian UNIFIL personnel were advised to use only main roads for movement in the area of operations.

54. UNIFIL continued to monitor ongoing proceedings at the Lebanese Military Court against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL peacekeepers in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2014.

## IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

55. As at 16 October, UNIFIL comprised 10,561 military personnel, including 387 women, from 40 troop-contributing countries, and 238 international and 579 national civilian staff, including 72 and 144 women, respectively. In addition, 48 military observers, including 3 women, of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization were under operational control of UNIFIL.

## V. Conduct and discipline

56. UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon continued to strengthen existing preventive measures against sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations country team on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network, which emphasizes accountability and a victim-centred approach

to implementing the sexual exploitation and abuse zero-tolerance policy, met to review the current measures and the risk assessment for Lebanon. No allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse have been received by either UNIFIL or the Office of the Special Coordinator. Pending the development of a suitable complaints mechanism, the network serves as an effective forum to address any allegation of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, involving all categories of United Nations personnel.

## VI. Observations

57. I welcome the election of a president of the Republic as the result of persistent efforts among political leaders to arrive at a Lebanese-owned solution, and I congratulate Michel Aoun on assuming the presidency. The filling of the presidential vacancy is a long-awaited step in overcoming the country's political and institutional crisis. It is my hope that it can now pave the way for broader political progress, without which Lebanon will remain in a state of paralysis. The formation of a united and functioning government and the on-time holding of parliamentary elections are essential for the viability and credibility of any effort to overcome the current crisis. It is a matter of accountability towards the citizens of Lebanon and of responsibility towards the country's international partners. A government formed and mandated on the basis of respect for the country's commitment to the principles and undertakings that have underpinned its stability and standing will be important to give Lebanon clear direction with the continued support of the international community. The election of a president, the formation of a functioning and united government and the holding of parliamentary elections by May 2017 will test the capacity of the Lebanese polity to return Lebanon to the constitutional and democratic process and to restore confidence, domestically and internationally, in its stability.

58. In that context, I commend Speaker Berri for his efforts to foster political dialogue. I also thank Prime Minister Salam for his leadership throughout the challenging period without a president and for his continued dedication as he steers the Cabinet through the sensitive caretaker phase. As called for by the Security Council, I urge Lebanese parties to adhere to the State's Constitution and National Pact. I appeal to all Lebanese leaders to resort to constructive dialogue, including through existing mechanisms, in negotiating a compromise agreement to end the political and institutional crisis. I also urge all parties to refrain from encouraging or engaging in any discourse that could fuel political or sectarian tensions at this sensitive time.

59. Building on the continued commitment of Lebanon and Israel to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), I encourage both parties to consider, with my Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, mutual confidence-building measures and steps that can help sustain the calm and stability that have prevailed over the last 10 years. In the current violent and unstable regional context, I urge both Lebanon and Israel not to lose sight of the central objective of a permanent ceasefire as envisaged in the resolution, which remains the best guarantee for long-term stability.

60. I welcome the relative calm that continued to prevail in the UNIFIL area of operations and across the Blue Line, in large part due to the commitment and efforts of both Lebanon and Israel and their overall close coordination and cooperation with UNIFIL. The strategic environment in southern Lebanon that UNIFIL, in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, established following the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), has proven its strength and viability over the years in a vastly changed regional environment.

61. I welcome the engaged participation in the tripartite forum by both parties, but also call upon them to proactively make use of the UNIFIL liaison and coordination mechanism to exchange information in real time that may contribute to preventing misunderstandings and heightened tensions on either side of the Blue Line. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for notifying UNIFIL of a military exercise in a timely manner, such that it enabled the Mission to liaise effectively with the Israel Defense Forces and to deploy its personnel in the area. That was all the more important owing to the heightened tensions in the area resulting from works being carried out by the Israel Defense Forces south of the Blue Line. I call upon the Israel Defense Forces to make the utmost use of UNIFIL channels to allow it to liaise with the Lebanese Armed Forces and do what is necessary to prevent a rise of tensions in sensitive areas along the Blue Line.

62. I am encouraged by the ongoing cooperation of the parties with UNIFIL on the visible marking of the Blue Line. I call upon both sides to keep in mind the strategic importance of the process for maintaining the cessation of hostilities. Full respect for the Blue Line is a critical factor in maintaining calm and stability in the area and any deliberate violation of the Blue Line is unacceptable.

63. The occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line has continued, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). I once again remind the Israeli authorities of their obligation, in accordance with the resolution, to withdraw their armed forces from the area. I urge them to engage closely with UNIFIL to that end.

64. I remain seriously concerned that Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace on an almost daily basis, in complete disregard of the sovereignty of Lebanon and the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). I once again call upon the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters.

65. It is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, as the host Government, to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel. I welcome the overall positive relationship between UNIFIL and the local population and the coordinated efforts by the Mission and the Lebanese Armed Forces to reach out to communities and raise awareness of the Force's right and need for freedom of movement throughout the area of operations.

66. The mine that exploded under a UNIFIL vehicle is a stark reminder of the dangers mines from past conflicts continue to pose for many years. The incident underlines the importance of troops having adequate equipment at their disposal, which in this case saved their lives.

67. I reiterate the importance of continued close collaboration between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). It

is a strategic priority to further enhance the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces for tasks mandated under the resolution in the UNIFIL area of operations on land and at sea.

68. Rhetoric by any party threatening to use force undermines the relative calm and stability that has been achieved between Lebanon and Israel in the past 10 years, as it only exacerbates the risk of tension or miscalculation that could lead to conflict. It also hinders the need to move past the current precarious status quo. Hizbullah's open acknowledgement of being in possession of a growing arsenal of sophisticated weapons, which it claims is supplied by the Islamic Republic of Iran and serves as a deterrent to potential Israeli aggression, contravenes resolution 1701 (2006) and remains of serious concern. It will be vital to ensure that the national defence strategy and other outstanding elements of the resolution be addressed in the framework of the national dialogue. The implementation of earlier decisions of the national dialogue is also overdue, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

69. The reaching of the 10-year mark since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) and the continued threat of terrorism underscore the need to bolster the Lebanese Armed Forces with effective assistance. At a time when armed non-State actors across the region are contesting the foundations of regional stability, the Lebanese Armed Forces remain a pillar of the country's stability and a key agent of the extension of State authority throughout Lebanon. I therefore welcome the consensus across the Lebanese political spectrum in support of the role of the army and security services. The capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, however, continue to be stretched. I welcome the assistance delivered bilaterally to the Lebanese Armed Forces as a sign of confidence in its role, and I encourage international partners to sustain their investment through continued support to the capabilities development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the strengthening of its presence in the south of Lebanon, as spelled out by the strategic dialogue, as well as in the areas of civil-military cooperation and human rights.

70. I remain concerned about the continuing presence of unauthorized weapons in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). The presence or firing of small arms in the area of operations, including during commemorative events, is not only in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) but also poses a risk to the population and UNIFIL personnel. I call upon the Government of Lebanon, which holds primary responsibility, to take all actions necessary to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations.

71. I welcome the legislation on the establishment of a national human rights institution that incorporates a national preventive mechanism against torture. It is an important step towards achieving increased accountability, transparency and compliance with human rights standards. Given the known link between human rights violations and the risk of radicalization, I encourage the Lebanese Armed Forces and Lebanese authorities to ensure that counter-terrorism and other security measures are consistent with the State's obligations, including under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

72. I condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the Syrian conflict in breach of the policy of disassociation that was agreed by all Lebanese political parties. The external military involvement of Hizbullah and other Lebanese elements exposes Lebanon to serious danger at a time when all efforts should focus on shielding it from the impact of regional crises. I therefore reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian conflict. Adherence to the country's policy of disassociation pursuant to the Baabda Declaration remains the only viable course for Lebanon in the current regional environment.

73. I condemn the movement of fighters and war materiel across the Lebanese-Syrian border in breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and shelling and shooting into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic. The lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border is no justification for violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon all concerned to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

74. I am seriously concerned about the dangerous implications of the deteriorating situation in the Syrian Arab Republic for the future stability of Lebanon. The stability of Lebanon cannot be taken for granted. The uncertainty of the direction of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic puts Lebanon at risk of becoming collateral damage in this regional crisis and makes it all the more urgent to shield Lebanon from its impact.

75. The risk of radicalization among segments of the Lebanese and refugee populations, combined with the availability of arms outside the control of Lebanon, present risks to the country's stability. Illegally held firearms pose a threat to the security of the citizens of Lebanon and undermine the rule of law. I remind Member States of their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) to prevent the sale or supply of unauthorized arms or related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon.

76. I welcome the Government's decision to work in collaboration with the United Nations to develop a national plan of action for the prevention of violent extremism in Lebanon. Consistent with my Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, my Special Coordinator and the United Nations family in Lebanon will continue to engage in that initiative, which I encourage national and international stakeholders to support as an investment in conflict prevention.

77. Following the successful municipal elections last May, I am encouraged by the Government's initial readiness to take steps to ensure that the 2017 parliamentary elections are held on time, in accordance with the Constitution. After two consecutive deferments, the people of Lebanon deserve to exercise their democratic right to elect their representatives. I strongly encourage strengthened women's participation and effective representation with the highest turnout possible. The United Nations remains ready to provide any technical assistance as may be requested by the Lebanese Government.

78. The political and economic stability of Lebanon is a matter of regional and international interest that requires continued collective attention. I welcome the unity which the Security Council has consistently demonstrated to insulate Lebanon from regional crises. I welcome the continued country-level engagement of the International Support Group for Lebanon in Beirut and urge the Group to remain

mobilized in support of Lebanon. I further encourage regional partners, including Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, to use their influence constructively in order to help protect Lebanon from the spillover of regional conflicts.

79. Following my exchange of letters with Prime Minister Salam concerning the country's request for my good offices in assisting with the delineation of the exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel, my Special Coordinator is in contact with all parties concerned. I encourage both Lebanon and Israel to look at the issue as an opportunity for establishing a mutually beneficial way to exploit offshore oil and gas resources and as an important confidence-building measure between the two countries.

80. I welcome the continued high level of donor support to Lebanon in response to the impact of the Syrian crisis, but stress that sustained support remains essential. Lebanon is at the front line of a conflict that will have long-term consequences for its economy, infrastructure and demography. Much more needs to be done, commensurate with the pledges made thus far. While host communities have been remarkable providers of assistance to refugees, the responsibility to address that crisis is collective. As world leaders came together at the General Assembly to discuss the urgent issue of refugees and migrants, I call upon all Member States, including from the region, to reinforce their assistance to help Lebanon cope with the impact of the crisis.

81. I remain highly concerned about the hardening of the discourse towards the refugee presence in Lebanon, including by some Government representatives regarding the return of Syrian refugees to their country. The position of the United Nations remains that Syrian refugees should return to the Syrian Arab Republic when conditions are conducive, or that they should be resettled in a third country. Host countries should not be expected to permanently settle refugees. When conditions allow, the United Nations will mobilize support for those returning to their home country. I urge the Government to publicly denounce xenophobic reactions that frame refugees as a threat.

82. I welcome the decision by the Government to review the regulatory framework governing access by Syrian refugees to the labour market. Concerted efforts are needed to facilitate the creation of employment opportunities for the Lebanese people and for Syrians. I urge the Government of Lebanon to waive, on a temporary basis, the residency fees for Syrians as outlined in its Statement of Intent. Progress in that matter will be crucial for the successful implementation of the London commitments.

83. I welcome the ongoing cooperation between the Lebanese authorities and Palestinian camp factions to ensure continued security in the camps. The need to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive and just peace settlement, is ever more urgent. The structural deficit of the finances of UNRWA remains a serious concern. I reiterate my call to donors for greater support to UNRWA to enable the Agency to assist Palestine refugees in Lebanon effectively.

84. The international community owes Lebanon a debt of gratitude for the exceptional generosity with which the Lebanese people and Government are hosting an unprecedented number of refugees fleeing the war in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Both as a host country for refugees and as a model of pluralism, coexistence and democracy in a region torn by sectarian strife, Lebanon is widely recognized as a common good. But the country's model suffers from political weaknesses and vulnerability to outside shocks. The dangerous conflict dynamics in the Syrian Arab Republic make it imperative for the international community to actively help consolidate the security and stability of Lebanon. Likewise, resolution 1701 (2006) requires us, collectively, to seek to move forward with its implementation. Having achieved 10 years of relative calm along the Blue Line, Lebanon and Israel have a mutual interest and obligation to now take steps for moving past the fragile status quo of mutual deterrence. Both sides stand to gain more from fully implementing the resolution than from maintaining an active military frontier for another 10 years. Progress on the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions will be central to ending conflict in the region and to a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

85. I wish to extend my continued appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon. I welcome the recently arrived UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Michael Beary of Ireland, and wish him success, and commend the work of the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL. I thank my Special Coordinator, Sigrid Kaag, and the staff of her office for their efforts.